

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

File No. 2505(209)-SD/52

Volume

Ministry of ~~Ministry of External Affairs,~~
Department of ~~Southern Division.~~
Office of

SECTION

NOTES/CORRESPONDENCE

Subject

Dr. Samar Guha's Report - Preservation of
two buildings at Singapore connected with
Netaji & INA.

Indexed on

Initials

Nos: 3

Corr: 34

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To be noted in Sectional Note Book

Initials of S. O./Suptd.

Initials of Clerk

(गौतम गुप्ता)
(GAUTAM GUPTA)
उप सचिव (ए एंड आर एम.)
D. S. Gupta (A&RM)
विदेश विभाग, नई दिल्ली
Ministry of External Affairs
New Delhi

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3002(5)SD/60

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Previous References

Later References

File No. 2505(209)-50/59

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SECRET

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

31. no (1) - Extracts from PH's Note of 2.12.59

Dr. Guha's political comments are coloured by the response he got from the Government of the country concerned to his special mission. He has no unfavourable comments on South Viet-Nam while he has commented adversely on Thailand. There is no democracy in either and, if anything, the South Viet-Nam Government is more authoritarian and opposed to the normal democratic freedoms of person or the Press than the Government of Thailand. We need not, therefore, pay too much attention to the political comments of Dr. Guha.

2. As regards his mission, he got Government support in Malaya though he himself mentions that the majority of the people do not support the Government view on Tibet. In other countries like Burma, though personal views were favourable there was no willingness to express an organized opinion. The political comments on Cambodia are, I think, too prejudiced because of Cambodian Government's policy of strict neutrality. The same would apply to comments on Indonesia.

Nor need we take the views expressed by Dr. Guha on the Burmese politics and the Army attitude mentioned in para 3 of PM's note too seriously. The Army attitude is decided by General Ne Win and not by some young Army Officers whom Dr. Guha must have met.

3. The above paragraphs are for your information. Further action should be taken only on paragraphs 5 and 6 of PM's note. Please take extracts of these paragraphs and ask for the comments of our Acting High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur on the points mentioned in para 6 of PM's note. You should, while writing to our Acting High Commissioner, make it clear that he should not make any open enquiries about this matter or refer to any of the Government authorities but merely give his opinion based on his local knowledge whether there is any strong feeling among the Indians in Singapore about having these two houses as some sort of museum or cultural centre to commemorate Netaji's memory. You should add that we want the Commissioner's frank assessment and that we would not like to take any initiative in this matter which may not have the full support of the persons of Indian origin in Singapore and the sympathy of the Singapore authorities. The Commissioner might be asked incidentally how these two houses are used at present and who owns them - the Singapore Government or some private individuals.

4. Please see the file below and pass on to S(E) You can take action on this note.

(M. J. Desai)
5.12.1959.

J.S. (S)

Please issue attached letter to Acting High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur.

(Y.K. Puri)
10.12.1959

31. no (2) - Issued - to H.C. Kuala Lumpur. For information

S(S) may also like to see, specially paras 1 and 2 of CS's note above.

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S.No:(3)

Recd from H.C.I. Kuala Lumpur

Pl. Ack.

inca ff

Sd. Y.K. Puri
25/1

Sd. D.J. Sen Gupta
21/1

S.No. (4): Issued to H.C.I. Kuala Lumpur

Submitted with notes

[Signature]

22.1.60

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85(s)

CS may please see Sl. No.3. In view of what Shri Prithi Singh has said, there does not seem to be much point in the Government of India acquiring the two buildings in question.

2. I may add that there are one or two Parliament questions enquiring about the decision regarding these two buildings.

[Signature]
(Y.K. Puri)
6 Feb 1960

C.S.

SECRET

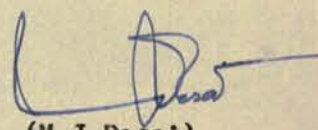
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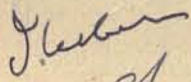
Submitted with reference to para 6 of P.M.'s note dated 2nd December, 1959.


2. So far as the two houses in Singapore connected with Netaji's activities are concerned, they are 5 and 7 miles away from the town and both in view of the location and the nature of the buildings, they are not suitable for the needs of our Mission in Singapore. None of the local inhabitants has shown any interest in these houses. Our Commission in Singapore is categorical on this point.

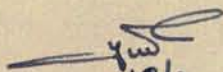
3. In view of this position, no further action need be taken on Dr. Guha's suggestion. So far as the questions in Parliament are concerned, we may, as suggested by P.M. in the case of the Netaji memorial, state that this is a matter between the people of Indian origin in Singapore and the Singapore Government and we do not think it desirable to take any initiative ourselves.


(M.J. Desai)
8.2.60.

P.M.



8/2


9/2/60


10/2

US(S)

Please add to file.


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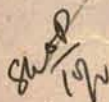
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File No.
Serial No.

1. Date of despatch
2. List of enclosures

Letter
Draft Memorandum
Telegram
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Dated

Compendium

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EXTRACTS FROM PM'S NOTE DATE 2ND DECEMBER, 1959.

3. U Ba Swe of Burma was particularly interested in our border troubles. In this connection, Dr. Guha mentioned that U Ba Swe told him that the army was entirely opposed to U Nu and his party. If by any chance U Nu won the coming elections, the army would probably take some action against U Nu's party.

x x

5. In his letter to me attached, Dr. Guha refers to the monument of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore. He said that the Indians in Singapore wanted our Government to take some initiative in this matter. I told him that this was a matter between the Indians in Singapore and the Singapore Government. If they agreed, we would not object, but we did not think it desirable to take any initiative ourselves.

6. Further, he said that there were two houses in Singapore - one was where Netaji lived and the other was used as headquarters of the Provisional Government of the I.N.A. He has given pictures of these which I attach. The Indians in Singapore were anxious that our Government should acquire these houses and use them for any suitable purpose.

December 10, 1959.

My dear

Dr. Samar Guha, who has recently been to various countries in South-East Asia, has given a report to the Prime Minister. I enclose herewith an extract copy of the report so far as it relates to two specific questions, viz. -

- (i) re-building of the Memorial in memory of the I.N.A. martyrs; and
- (ii) the question of preservation of two buildings at Singapore connected with Netaji and the INA.

I also enclose, for your information, a copy of paragraphs 5 and 6 of Prime Minister's minute on the report which relate to these two matters. You will notice that with regard to one point, viz., the question of re-building of the Memorial, PM has decided that this matter is one between the Indians in Singapore and the Singapore Government and that we should not take any initiative in the matter.

2. As regards the other point, we shall be very grateful for your comments. We should like, in particular, to know who are the owners of these two houses - whether the Singapore Government or some private individuals and how they are being used, i.e., whether they are really vacant or people are living in them, etc. I should like to make it clear that we would not like to take any initiative in this matter for the present, nor make open enquiries with regard to the above points, nor refer to any of the Government authorities. What we want from you is such facts as you can give from your own personal knowledge or from your officers and also your own frank assessment as to whether there is any strong feeling among the Indians in Singapore about having these two houses as some sort of museum or cultural centre to commemorate Netaji's memory, how the matter is likely to be taken by the Singapore Government and whether, in your view, the museum or cultural centre would be a success.

Yours sincerely,


(Y.K. Puri)

Shri Prithi Singh,
Acting High Commissioner for India in Malaya,
KUALA LUMPUR.

Encls:2.



No. F.1(70)-S/59

By..... 786.....SD/60
SECRET / BY BAG

HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA
KUALA LUMPUR

January 14th, 1960.

Pe ach:
Wm psp.

Dear Shri Puri,

Will you please refer to your letter No. 3037-JSS/59, dated December 10th, 1959, on points arising from Dr. Samar Guha's report to the Prime Minister?

I have now met K.V. Narayana Menon, Attache at our Commission in Singapore, and the information desired by you in para 2 of your letter, together with my comments, is set out below.

I. Location and ownership of the two houses:

(a) Indian Independence League headquarters, 7 Chancery Lane, is owned by Mr. Leng Guan, a businessmen, who himself resides at 14 Telok Ayer Street, Singapore. The house is vacant and a sign board outside indicates that it is available for rent at \$1,000/- per month (unfurnished) or for sale. This property is approximately 5 miles distant from the town proper and about 1/4 mile off the bus route.

The existing Commission Office building is about 2 miles distant from the town and, being on a bus route, is easily accessible to our nationals who call in large numbers each day for Consular facilities. The property is owned by the Government of India.

(b) Netaji's residence at 61 Meyer Road, Katong, Singapore. The ownership is not known but it is understood that a Chinese who is a Bank Manager, is residing in the house. It is a big old-fashioned Chinese-style built house, which did not appear to me to be in a good state of repairs. It is located about 7 miles out of town, in a built-up area, on the Coast Road.

The existing Residence, also owned by us, is about 4 miles out of town, in an excellent residential area, with its own garden, hence preferably more suitable as a Head of Mission's residence than the premises at 61 Meyer Road.

II. Local sentiment for preservation of these two premises:

(i) [Narayana Menon has not been aware of any desire on the part of Indians domiciled in Singapore for the preservation of these two premises, nor did Shri S.K. Banerji, former High Commissioner, mention to him that he had heard the subject raised by any person or persons of our origin, even though he (Shri Banerji) had kept in very close touch with them during his tour in Malaya and Singapore.]

It was only during Dr. Guha's recent visit to Singapore, that Shri G.S. Muthukrishnan, local Press Correspondent for the PTI, (formerly the Chief Editor of Azad Hind Group of dailies published by the Indian Independence League Headquarters in Singapore), called on Narayana Menon

on one of his periodical visits and informed him that Dr. Guha had convened a meeting, presided over by Shri A.K. Mitra (the prominent Lawyer referred to by Dr. Guha in his letter dated December 2nd, 1959) and that Dr. Guha had put forward the proposal to rebuild the War Memorial and had then initiated the adoption of a 'Resolution' requesting the Prime Minister of Singapore to re-erect the War Memorial. A copy of the 'Resolution', which Muthukrishnan handed over to Narayana Menon, is enclosed, wherein you will note that there is no mention made for the preservation of the two premises. (Narayana Menon recalls that Muthukrishnan expressed to him his own enthusiastic support for the rebuilding of the Memorial and had indicated that he would seek a meeting with Mr. Rajaretnam, Singapore's Minister for Cultural Affairs, to enlist his support).

Narayana Menon understands that the 'Resolution' has not been forwarded to the Prime Minister of Singapore because, at the time, it was felt that a resolution of this kind, if it had been adopted by a much bigger and a more representative gathering of persons of all races than those who attended the meeting, would stand a better chance of success.

(ii) (a) Museum. To perpetuate the memory of Netaji in Singapore would only be of sentimental value to the local Indian population and would, perhaps, not find support amongst the 1½ million Chinese nor from the foreign elements, mainly composed of U.K. and Australia, who continue to wield considerable influence in the national affairs of the State of Singapore.

(b) Cultural Centre. There are 700,000 persons of Indian origin in the Federation of Malaya, compared with only 100,000 in Singapore, therefore an Indian Cultural Centre, not limited to Netaji and the I.N.A. would serve a very useful purpose in the Federation of Malaya. The Malays, who are in majority in the Federation of Malaya, have a closer affinity to Indian culture, customs etc. than the Chinese domiciled in this area.

III. Conclusion:

(i) Persons of Indian origin in Singapore have not, to-date, expressed to us the wish either directly or indirectly to assist them to preserve the two premises connected with Netaji and the I.N.A.

If any such feeling becomes evident in the future and has the support of all the communal and racial groups in Singapore, they themselves have sufficient funds of their own with which to take the necessary steps towards the preservation of these two premises. (It is doubtful whether the majority Chinese population of Singapore would give any appreciable support to a wholly-Indian project of this kind).

(ii) The Malayan Indian Congress in the Federation has already decided to perpetuate the memory of Netaji by laying the foundation stone of an impressive building, which they propose to construct in Kuala Lumpur from funds collected from the MIC Branches all over the Federation. This is in contrast to the ineffectiveness of the Gandhi Memorial Committee which was set up in Kuala Lumpur and, it is reported, has collected about \$100,000/-, but has nothing to show for it.

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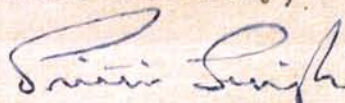
(iii) The present premises of the Commission for India, both residential and for the Office, were acquired by the Government of India at very advantageous terms and are eminently more suitable for the purposes of our representation in Singapore, than the two premises at 7 Chancery Lane and 61 Meyer Road.

(iv) The Singapore Government is not yet fully self-governing, hence Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, even should he support a proposal of this nature, will find it embarrassing to give it his unqualified approval in the face of United Kingdom objections to any formal recognition of Netaji and the part the I.N.A. played in Singapore during World War II.

(v) Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues in Singapore are desperately keen to mould the three major racial groups, (Chinese, Malays and Indians) which form the population of Singapore, into a united citizenry, therefore, any accent on any project which is mainly Indian in concept would, perhaps, not find favour with them.

(vi) Finally, our own expressed policy has been to encourage persons of Indian origin, domiciled abroad, to absorb themselves into the life of these countries and I feel that any step which we might take which helps them to maintain rigidly their emotional and/or communal links with India, actually prevents them from giving their whole-hearted loyalty to the countries of their adoption.

Yours sincerely,



(PRITHI SINGH)

Shri Y.K. Puri, I.C.S.,
Joint Secretary to the
Government of India,
Ministry of External Affairs,
New Delhi.

NSA

RESOLUTION

"This meeting of the citizens of Singapore resolves that Singapore being now a free country, a proper condition has been created for the rebuilding of the War Memorial known as the Martyrs' Tomb which was erected by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in memory of the great fighters for freedom and liberation of the South East Asian peoples from foreign domination.

It further requests the Prime Minister of the State of Singapore, who is well known as a fighter for freedom, to take necessary steps to re-erect the War Memorial which symbolised the spirit of sacrifice, sufferings and dedication for the cause of liberation of South East Asian peoples.

It further resolves that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister of Singapore."

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SECRET

January 20, 1960


Issued
9/24
207

My dear Prithi Singh,

S no (3)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter No. F.1(70)-S/59 of 14th January about points arising from Dr. Samar Guha's report to the Prime Minister and your comments thereon.

Yours sincerely,


(Y.K. Puri)

Shri Prithi Singh,
Acting High Commissioner for
India,
Kuala Lumpur

Three Photographs.



Former Head Quarter of Azad Hind Provisional
Government at 7 Chancery Lane, Singapore



Warm time Residential Building of Netaji at
Meyer Road, Singapore.



Place opposite to City Council where War Memorial
to I N A martyrs was built by Netaji at Singapore.

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